

# Holmdel Softball Club

## D League Rules

As Accumulated by Gary Cooper and John Pfaff, D League Chief Umpires – way back when.  
Edited by Jose Saavedra, Softball League Secretary, April 1990 and Chief Umpire, 1991 Season  
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1. **COLLISIONS:** Safety and sportsmanship are essential. Toward this end, **ALL PLAYERS MUST TAKE PRECAUTIONS TO AVOID COLLISIONS.** If a player does not try to avoid an avoidable collision, the player should be called out. Collisions must be avoided by runners at all times, even when they slide. If a runner avoids a collision and is called out as a result, the runner is awarded the base. It is the responsibility of the team captain to notify their players of this and all rules.
2. **SAFETY BASE:** There is a "safety base" at first base. That means that only defensive players can step on first base. The runners must run alongside first base, touching an imaginary base, which if it were real would lie adjacent to first base. The purpose of this is to prevent collisions between runners and less skilled first basemen who might be stepping on the center of the bag. In the early part of the season you should stress the importance of this. Any batter who collides with the first baseman because he/she did not run to the safety base should be called out. Again the emphasis is on safety.
3. **OBSTRUCTIONS AND SAFE SOFTBALL:** A player who does not have the ball **CANNOT** block any base or base-path. If this happens, the runner should be awarded the base.
4. **NO BUNTING, STEALING, OR LEADING OFF:** There is no stealing, leading from a base or bunting allowed.
5. **TRAVESTY RULE:** The "Travesty" rule applies in the event that the team at bat increases its lead by 10 runs in their turn at bat in any one inning, that inning ends at that point and it is considered a travesty. Of course the team that was at bat is still awarded the 10 runs. Example: If a team is winning by any number of runs when they come to bat, they can score at most 10 runs in any one inning. If a team is losing by 4 runs when they come to bat, however, they are allowed to score 14 runs.
6. **INFIELD FLY:** Must be zero or one out, with runners on first and second--third is optional. Ball must be **FAIR** (as judged by the ump), and must be catchable by an infielder. The play is still an infield fly if an outfielder catches it when an infielder could have caught it. Ball is in play, runners can advance at their own risk, but must tag up if the ball is caught. Batter is immediately out and no runner is forced.
7. **THE HOT DOG RULE:** The "Hot Dog" rule applies. This rule says that a skilled player at one position cannot overplay a ball and take the play away from a less skilled player at another position. For example, a very skilled shortstop is not allowed to play an infield pop up which is **OBVIOUSLY** the (less skilled) first baseman's ball. If the above play should occur, you should award the batter first base and warn the offending player (in this case the skilled shortstop). Be careful with this rule. The key is **OBVIOUSLY**.
8. **TEAM MAKE-UP:** A team in D league cannot field more than 8 of any one gender on the field at any one time. If 10 players are on the field, then at least two must be of each gender (at least two men and at least two women); if nine players are on the field then at least one must be of each gender. If a team shows up with more than 8 of a gender and none of the other, only eight can play at any one time.
9. **MINIMUM BATTING MAKEUP:** In addition to the above "8 on the field" rule, a team that cannot field at least one woman and at least one man in their batting order will be assessed one (1) out for each pass through the batting order for as long as the situation exists.
10. **IN THE GRASS IS ALL YOU CAN GET:** If the ball is hit either on the fly or on a bounce and goes into the tall grass, the batter and base runners are entitled to all they can get. There is no ground rule double in this case.

11. **WHO BATS, WHO DOESN'T:** The batting order may be expanded to include all players who show up for a game. Not all team members who show up must be in the batting order. However, any player who plays defense must also be in the batting order. In other words, we can have designated hitters, but no designated fielders. For example, a team shows up with 18 players. They don't all have to play. Those that play must be in the batting order at some time. What is also legal is that a team may start with 18 batters in the line-up, and end with 8.
12. **PINCH RUNNING:** only the player who made the last batted out is allowed to pinch run for another player. The player who the pinch runner runs for is NOT removed from the batting order.
13. **CATCHER:** All teams must field a catcher. If a team has only 8 players, one of the 8 fielders must be a catcher. If the opposing team is nice enough to supply a catcher, that is allowed.
14. **LEGAL GAMES:** All games are considered legal unless forfeited or postponed. There is NO minimum number of innings that must be played to make the game legal. However, captains can agree to a minimum number of innings to be played for the game to be official. This must be discussed between the team captains and the field ump before the start of the game.
15. **REMOVAL FROM THE GAME:** Once a player is removed from the batting order, they are out of the game. For example, if a player has left temporarily when their turn at bat comes up, or is taken out for a pinch-hitter, they are gone. This rule may be waived in the case of injury, in which case a previously removed player may return to substitute for an injured player, but only with approval of both managers and the umpire.
16. **FIELDER SUBSTITUTIONS:** The fielding team may use unlimited substitutions provided the new players are inserted at the beginning of the inning. Once the team has taken the field officially (after the first pitch of the inning), it may make no substitutions except to replace the pitcher or an injured fielder.
17. **IT'S SLOW PITCH, FOLKS:** The speed of pitches should be reasonably slow and the arc must be between 5 and 12 feet high. The umpire has the right to request the pitcher to slow down or change the arc. Repeated inappropriate pitches can be declared "no pitches" or balls, at the ump's discretion.
18. **PITCHING POSITION:** The pitcher may pitch from any reasonable position (determined by the umpire) near the pitchers plate. It is not necessary that the pitchers foot be in contact or behind with the pitchers plate before or during the pitch.
19. **RELEASE OF PITCH:** Upon releasing the pitch, the pitchers palm must be skyward (or facing upward).
20. **NO WALKS OR STRIKEOUTS:** Official rules state that if a batter with 2 strikes on him/her hits a foul ball, that's strike 3. D league waives this rule. The customary 4 balls is a walk and 3 strikes is an out is also usually suspended for players who haven't played much softball. The idea is to encourage hitting the ball and thereby being active in the game, therefore, an umpire may award a base on balls for 6 balls and a strikeout for 4 strikes. It is at the umpire's discretion. Of course for a skilled player, the umpire should be less lenient. Umpires and managers should discuss this before the game. If the teams are D+ for example, they may wish to have 4 balls and 3 strikes as the base on balls and strikeout metrics.
21. **EJECTIONS:** If an umpire ejects a player from the game, they can specify that the player leave the grounds. If the player hangs around to further abuse the ump, the ump can forfeit the game against the offending player's team if the player fails to leave within ONE MINUTE.
22. **BAT THROWING:** if someone throws a bat so that it is potentially dangerous, that person should be called out. If the person repeats, then the person should be ejected from the game for safety reasons.

**CLARIFIED SAFETY BASE AND HOT DOG RULES:** The safety base rule is actually subsumed within the safety base- running rule, which states that runners must make every attempt to avoid collisions. This usually manifests itself as running to an imaginary base (the fabled "safety base") 1-2 feet to the right of first base, and by sliding into other bases when there is a play at those bases. However, this does not mean that runners must do these things when there is no play. If the runner THINKS there's no play, and there's a

collision, she/he is out for not being careful enough. If the runner is careless enough, in the ump's opinion, the ump can eject the player from the game.

The hot dog rule, as applied to softball, is pretty clear by simply saying that a player may not make a play that should be played by another fielder. For example, there's a weak player in right field, a fly ball is hit to right field, and an skilled player in center field comes into right field to make the catch. If it was clearly the right fielder's ball, the batter is safe. If it is hit between them, then it arguably is either one's ball, and it would not be hot-dogging for the center fielder to make the catch. Where the hot dog rule is broken the most is at home plate, where the pitcher runs in to take throws to the plate, instead of letting the catcher take the throw, and backing the catcher up. If the pitcher takes the throw (and not because the ball went by the catcher), the hot dog rule says the runner is safe at home.

Q: What happens to runners when the hot dog rule is invoked?

A: At the moment the hot dog rule is called, the ball is in play, and runners may advance at their own risk, just as if the fielder dropped the ball, EXCEPT when this would lead to an easy force out (similar to the infield fly rule. If there is the chance of an easy force out, then the ball is dead, and runners advance to the base to which they're forced.

Example: runners on first and third, batter hits a fly ball to a weak player at 3rd base. Runners hold, but the skilled short stop comes over and catches the 3rd baseperson's ball. Ump calls the hot dog rule (so the batter gets first), and since they could easily force the person at 2nd, the ump calls the ball dead, lets the runner at 1st take second, and holds the other runner at 3rd.

Another example: Runners on 2nd and 3rd, same pop fly. This time, there being no chance for an easy force out, the ump keeps the ball in play, lets the batter take first, and if the runners want to run, they can.